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Chairman: Mr. Al-Haini ..... (Oman)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.20 a.m.

Agenda item 112: Advancement of women (*continued*) (A/56/3, A/56/38/Rev.1, A/56/174, A/56/222-S/2001/736, A/56/268, A/56/279, A/56/306, A/56/316, A/56/328, A/56/329 and A/56/472)

Agenda item 113: Implementation of the outcome of the Fourth World Conference on Women and of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century" (*continued*) (A/56/222-S/2001/736, A/56/306 and A/56/319 and Add.1)

1. **Mr. Hadjiargyrou** (Cyprus) said that his delegation aligned itself with the statement made on behalf of the European Union, with whose positions it fully agreed.

2. His Government shared the belief that the elimination of discrimination against women constituted an integral part of the struggle for social development and social justice, and was pursuing policies designed to lead to a gender-sensitive society, with the ultimate goal of full equality. While it recognized the importance of international cooperation, his delegation nonetheless believed that the advancement of women's rights was primarily the responsibility of Governments.

3. In that context, his delegation emphasized the importance of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and wished to announce that, following the adoption in 1999 of a law which removed a provision that had discriminated against women with regard to the nationality of their children, his Government had withdrawn the sole reservation against the Convention that it had maintained since ratifying it in 1985. It had also signed the Optional Protocol to the Convention, in February 2001, and Protocol No. 12 to the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, and had adopted two laws, one relating to violence in the family and the other to sexual exploitation, trafficking in human beings and child pornography.

4. His Government was determined to increase the participation of women in decision-making and politics, with the goal of a minimum of 30 per cent representation of women, as set by the Beijing Platform for Action. It had therefore organized special training programmes aimed at encouraging women to enter politics and at creating a more friendly environment for women within political parties; set up a cross-political citizens' group to lobby and campaign for equal representation of women and men in politics; sensitized the mass media to support that cause; appointed women to high-ranking political posts; and launched a campaign to support women candidates.

5. The women of Cyprus, having suffered the consequences of military conflict, displacement and foreign occupation over the past 27 years, played an active part in conflict resolution and the peace process. Their activities included training programmes on conflict resolution and global environmental sensitivity and they also devoted much effort to raising awareness of the Cyprus political problem and to bringing together Greek and Turkish Cypriot women.

6. **Mr. Perera** (Sri Lanka) said that he endorsed the statement made by the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

7. Women in Sri Lanka had always enjoyed equality with men and participated in decision-making in the home and in society at large. They had presented the world with its first woman Prime Minister in 1960 and currently exercised the presidency of the country in the person of Madam Kumaratunga.

8. Women provided financial inputs into the economy and were active in the agricultural and manufacturing sectors, in business and in academia. His country's development policy and its investment in education and health had resulted in a high level of health standards and literacy among the population, benefiting both girls and boys equally.

9. However, some problems remained in Sri Lanka, as elsewhere. In order to eliminate them, Governments must meet their responsibility for implementing the decisions taken at the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly on the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action. The international community, including the United Nations, as well as civil society, had a crucial role to play in that regard.

10. In its commitment to ending discrimination against women, the Government of Sri Lanka had created institutional structures to deal with women's issues and organized workshops on gender-responsive

policy formulation and analysis. The National Committee on Women was charged with the responsibility for implementing the provisions of the Women's Charter adopted in 1993. The National Plan of Action put in place after the Beijing Conference continued to be implemented and was reviewed periodically, taking into account the new challenges that arose.

11. Bearing in mind that violence against women formed the core of gender-based inequalities and hindered the development and well-being of women, the Government of Sri Lanka had, among other policy and legislative measures, made amendments to the Penal Code, adding new offences, such as sexual harassment and marital rape, and increasing the penalties for sex-related offences. Non-governmental organizations also played a vital role in the advancement of women both individually and in collaborative efforts with Government agencies.

12. Desiring to see action taken, both nationally and internationally, against all forms of transnational crime that particularly affected women, Sri Lanka had become a party to the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, and the Protocol Against the Smuggling of Migrants by Land, Sea and Air.

13. Globalization had resulted in the marginalization of the developing countries in the world economy. The worsening economic conditions it had brought had not only widened the gap between rich and poor, but had particularly affected women. In the struggle against poverty, especially among women, the need for a more enabling international environment with shared responsibilities was compelling.

14. **Mrs. Kidanu** (Ethiopia) endorsed the statement made by the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

15. Despite the efforts made within the United Nations to encourage Governments to ensure that women participated fully in the economic, social, cultural and political activities of their countries, many women remained victims of poverty, sexual harassment, violence and employment inequality, as well as the HIV/AIDS pandemic. The United Nations and the international community should intensify their efforts towards the implementation of the decisions taken at the Beijing Conference and the special sessions of the General Assembly on women and HIV/AIDS, and to ensure that the key contribution of women in all spheres, from the struggle against poverty to the promotion of peace, was duly recognized.

16. Her Government, desiring to improve the situation of Ethiopian women, had incorporated the pertinent provisions of the various United Nations conventions and of other international instruments into the Federal Constitutions and into its policies and legislation, and was continuing to amend the relevant laws with the objective of improving the status of women. The Government was working to reduce poverty among women by enabling them to have fair access to economic resources such as land, credit and other facilities, with the support of non-governmental organizations which organized income-generating activities and provided economic assistance to poor women. Funds for building the institutional capacity of regional and communal women's organizations were being put in place. In addition, the Government, non-governmental organizations, religious organizations and women's groups were joining efforts in the campaign against the increased danger of HIV/AIDS. The National Council on HIV/AIDS had the task of providing support to women and children to enable them to protect themselves and of giving timely assistance to those already infected. The education and training policy was aimed at increasing the rate of female enrolment in schools so as to bridge the gap between male and female enrolment. The participation of women in Parliament had increased, and women had been appointed to high public offices previously dominated by men.

17. The Ethiopian Government was endeavouring to eliminate all forms of violence against women through legislative measures and to raise the awareness of the public with regard to the constitutional rights of women. Women's associations and other concerned bodies had been campaigning for tougher action to be taken with regard to any form of violence committed against women.

18. Ethiopia was determined to improve the situation of women, but, like all developing countries, it was faced with economic constraints. In its efforts to attain that goal, it was counting on the cooperation and financial support of the international community.

19. **Ms. Fritsche** (Liechtenstein) said that the most important recent event for women had perhaps been the special session of the General Assembly on HIV/AIDS which had agreed on the need for women to take decisions on their sexuality as a means of successfully combating the HIV/AIDS pandemic.

20. In the field of law, the most encouraging event had been the entry into force of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, which his country would ratify on 24 October, United Nations Day. The Protocol would play an essential role in promoting awareness of women's rights and in their implementation. The international community should take the Protocol as a basis for achieving gender equality, development and peace, which had been the objectives of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly on women and were more relevant than ever since there could be no sustainable peace or development without gender equality. Those issues therefore belonged on the agenda of all United Nations activities not only those of the Third Committee.

21. Women should also cease to be regarded as victims and be seen as full participants in all areas. That mental reorientation was taking place although, unfortunately, very slowly; as a result, women were increasingly regarded as key players not only in development but also in conflict prevention and settlement and peace-building, as the Security Council had recognized in its resolution 1325 (2000).

22. The situation in Afghanistan was an extreme example of the exclusion of women from decision-making, in which the presence and participation of women in peace negotiations would be of the utmost importance, as the women representing that country at the United Nations had recently pointed out to the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Afghanistan.

23. She strongly believed that the appointment of women as special representatives and envoys of the Secretary-General could play a catalytic role and that the United Nations should set an example in that respect. The women ambassadors to the United Nations would continue to place particular emphasis on that point in their contacts with the Secretary-General and appreciated the increasing support they received from their male colleagues in their endeavours. Conversely, the appointment of a man to serve on the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women and the fact that the Commission on the Status of Women had placed the role of men and boys in the advancement of women high on its agenda, were to be welcomed. She also paid tribute to the decision by the United Kingdom delegation to bring together a group of countries that had resolved to work for gender mainstreaming within the United Nations, bearing in mind the leading role that women were being increasingly called on to play in that field.

24. **Mr. Niehaus** (Costa Rica), speaking on agenda item 112, associated himself with the statement made by the Islamic Republic of Iran on behalf of the Group of 77 and China and with that made by the Chilean delegation on behalf of the Rio Group.

25. His country had adopted laws against conjugal violence and to reform its judicial system in order to protect women, from childhood, against all forms of violence. For example, in 1998 the Women's National Institute, responsible for elaborating guidelines to promote gender equality, had been established, and a law creating standing committees on the status of women in local decision-making bodies and provisions granting assistance to women living in poverty had been adopted. In addition, the political parties were obliged to accord 40 per cent of the places to women in their lists for municipal and legislative elections. More recently, the law known as the Responsible Fatherhood Act, which was very important in that it established a special unprecedented legal regime and directly linked the advancement of women to the protection of children, had been adopted. It obliged the father of a child born out of wedlock to contribute to the cost of the child's education and upbringing and, in the event of his refusing to do so, could force him to comply through a judicial ruling except where the man concerned could prove by means of a DNA test that he was not the father. In addition, the recent ratification by his country of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women had further supplemented the legal arrangements established in Costa Rica, as had the creation of a legislative commission dealing exclusively with women's issues which considered draft laws and international conventions aimed at enhancing the status of women.

26. Equality between men and women or, better still, complementarity and mutual assistance between men and women, were essential to the establishment of a

society that respected the fundamental rights of all citizens, particularly the right to development and social welfare.

27. **Ms. Rasheed** (Observer for Palestine) associated herself with the statement made by the Islamic Republic of Iran on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

28. Poverty, violence, fundamental rights and armed conflicts were issues of particular importance to Palestinian women. Accordingly, they endeavoured to implement the recommendations of major conferences concerning women's rights so that they could play a more decisive role at all levels and in all fields. Palestinian women continued to struggle to achieve freedom, peace and prosperity in the face of the harsh reality of the continuing Israeli occupation, and to fight inequality and discrimination within their own society. The main obstacle, however, continued to be the oppressive Israeli policies and measures which impeded their socio-economic progress and thus prevented them from enhancing their status. It had therefore been very difficult for them to promote a viable and comprehensive plan of action. They had also suffered from the confiscation of land and water resources, the expansion of settlements, the restriction of movement and the closure of the occupied Palestinian territory, including Jerusalem. Moreover, the indiscriminate use of excessive force against Palestinian civilians by the Israelis had aggravated the situation on the ground, causing over 680 deaths, many of them children, and over 25,000 injured among Palestinian civilians, to say nothing of the devastation and destruction of land, homes and infrastructure.

29. Those obstacles had not prevented Palestinian women from pursuing initiatives and promoting national programmes of action geared towards their full participation in the building of society. Thus, they had helped to establish the foundations for the social, economic and institutional development of a future Palestinian State, including the educational, health and economic infrastructure, while bearing in mind the issue of gender. They had played a role in mainstreaming women's issues in policies, plans and programmes, including at the ministerial level, and had cooperated with non-governmental organizations in elaborating a national strategy for achieving equality, development, peace and prosperity. Thus, the Palestinian Authority adhered to the purposes and principles of all the relevant conventions and all the recommendations of major conferences when preparing legislation and programmes to assist women.

30. In spite of the serious deterioration of the situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including Jerusalem, the Palestinians reaffirmed their commitment to achieving a just, comprehensive and lasting peace for both parties — a peace that would also ensure the rights of women in Palestinian society.

31. **Ms. Suñé** (Andorra) said that her country had taken a number of important measures to implement the recommendations of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, such as the creation, in May 2001, of the Department of the Family within the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare; the submission of its initial report to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, which had revealed shortcomings within the administration and other national bodies; and the signature of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the adoption of the amendment to article 20, paragraph 1 thereof.

32. The Department of the Family was collaborating, inter alia, with the Ministries of Justice and the Interior and with non-governmental organizations to implement the Protocol, which was aimed at combating violence against women, and an extensive survey on that issue was under way.

33. Furthermore, special attention was paid to the status of women in the workplace, which was favourable in the case of women heads of enterprises but unfavourable in the case of women employed in the service sector. That issue would benefit from consideration at the next International Conference on Financing for Development.

34. Events of major importance for women around the world included the twenty-sixth special session of the General Assembly on the question of HIV/AIDS, the World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance, held in Durban, and the Second World Assembly on Ageing, to be held in Madrid; they all involved issues close to the hearts of women.

35. With regard to the question of women and armed conflict, it was impossible to overemphasize the importance of women's participation in the various peace processes, as the Security Council had declared

in resolution 1325 (2000) on women, peace and security. In that regard, her delegation expressed its solidarity with the Afghan population, especially the women, and hoped that the action being taken by the United Nations would help to improve their lot and ensure their participation in the adoption of decisions concerning them.

36. **Mr. Agam** (Malaysia) associated his delegation with the statement made by the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. He stressed that the objectives of the major conferences held during the 1990s, including the Beijing Conference, had not yet been attained in many countries, including his own, because of several obstacles encountered by the developing countries, including lack of resources, the debt burden, the decline in international funding, and globalization. Those obstacles hampered national development and, considering that the 12 areas of concern to women defined at the Beijing Conference in fact related to development in general, slowed the advancement of women, who continued to be excluded from development right from childhood because of their subordinate status, gender-based prejudices, lack of access to education and, above all, poverty. Thanks to the foresight of its leaders since independence in placing education, health and the fight against poverty at the top of its development agenda, Malaysia had today emerged as a prosperous nation. Thus, its maternal-protection and health-care systems had been acknowledged as among the best in the world.

37. In the struggle to eradicate poverty, especially among women, greater recourse should be had, as the Secretary-General had proposed, to microcredit. Studies had shown that women had a loan-repayment rate of almost 100 per cent and, after the second or third loan, the majority of women borrowers were able to move their family members out of the grip of poverty, thereby proving their ability to borrow and reimburse and to influence the country's development. The Government also recommended the adoption of other economic measures and development strategies for poor women, including those which provided for equal access to economic resources, information and development opportunities, especially for rural women, who were participating more and more in economic life.

38. Malaysia agreed with the Secretary-General's view that information and communication technology could contribute significantly to the empowerment of women. It was therefore committed to developing a knowledge-based society in which every person, regardless of race, religion, gender or place of residence, had access to new information technology and in particular the Internet. In order to prevent women from becoming mere bystanders in that regard, it had developed a women's action plan in cooperation with the Global Knowledge Partnership.

39. With regard to the issue of violence against women, his country was ready to take all necessary measures, in cooperation with the international community, with a view to eliminating that phenomenon, which threatened not only migrant women but all women, for all women were potentially vulnerable to rape, trafficking and sex tourism. His Government had adopted the Domestic Violence Act in 1994 and was cooperating with non-governmental organizations to push for greater transparency of police procedures in that area and to make the various institutions aware of the problem. Generally speaking, it encouraged civil society to contribute to the advancement of women through gender-sensitizing programmes and the mainstreaming of Malaysian women in all sectors and at all levels of society.

40. Lastly, his Government had in the previous year established a Ministry of Women and Family Affairs to coordinate national programmes in that area; to ensure that women's concerns were taken into account in the policy-formulation process and that no measures discriminated against women; to strengthen the institution of the family, considered as the foundation of society, and to improve the socio-economic well-being of women through capacity-building, entrepreneurship programmes and the strengthening of family values in society.

41. **Mr. Giorgio** (Eritrea) associated himself with the statement made by the delegation of Iran on behalf of the Group of 77 and China and said that the Beijing Platform for Action was still valid and should be implemented rapidly at the national, regional and international levels, with clear linkages between those levels. In particular, he welcomed the contribution made to its implementation by the United Nations system, especially the Commission on the Status of Women, and other international organizations. The issue of equality between men and women was a human rights question and full respect for that

principle was one of the building blocks for the sustainable development of a just society.

42. In view of the contribution made by Eritrean women to the country's independence struggle and the role they continued to play in the various spheres of community and national life, Eritrea had adopted policies aimed at ensuring respect for their human rights and their participation at all levels of political and economic decision-making processes. Thus, provisions had been adopted establishing equality of rights between men and women with respect to the nationality of children and the minimum age for marriage. Furthermore, since the reform of the land tenure system, women — whether divorced, widowed, or unmarried — had the same access to land ownership as men. Other provisions had been adopted to improve the status of Eritrean women, concerning in particular the equal division of marital property in the event of divorce, equal opportunities for employment, equal pay for equal work and the right to two months' paid maternity leave.

43. The status of Eritrean women had improved since the Beijing Conference, particularly as a result of the Government's policy of reserving 30 per cent of parliamentary seats for women. Furthermore, more women currently held posts in both the public and the private sectors.

44. Eritrea was facing serious social and economic constraints which affected women in particular, including the displacement of the civilian population as a result of the border conflict with Ethiopia, the reintegration and demobilization of combatants, environmental degradation and inadequate physical and social infrastructures. However, women were the main beneficiaries of social services. The Government was currently concentrating its efforts on the economic recovery of the country, which should bring more normalcy to the life of women.

45. Lastly, the availability of gender-disaggregated data in all sectors and at all levels of government was essential for the sound planning of gender-specific programmes.

46. **Mr. Hidayat** (Indonesia) associated himself with the statement made by Iran on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. He welcomed the progress made by the international community towards achievement of its common goals promoting the advancement of women, and in particular the debate in the Economic and Social Council at its 2001 substantive session on the issue of access to and transfer of knowledge and technology, which were of particular importance to women because of globalization, of which they were often the first victims.

47. His country also welcomed the convening by the Division for the Advancement of Women of an expert group on the situation of rural women in the context of globalization, which had provided a basis for the activities planned by Indonesia as follow-up to the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly. The expert group had rightly emphasized that rural women must have equal access to productive resources, such as land, capital, technology, employment, social services and decision-making, which were essential aspects of genuine equality and participation.

48. Indonesia also welcomed the progress being made in addressing the problem of violence against women migrant workers. The international community must continue to pay attention to their situation and to explore the link between immigration and trafficking in women.

49. In Indonesia, where social conditions and the situation of women had deteriorated as a result of the financial crisis, the Government had adopted five priorities for action especially in the economic area to provide assistance to women in such sectors as health and education; those priorities were reflected in the State budget for 2002. The Government was taking direct measures to ensure women's participation as agents of development, and had established information and communications technology centres which should benefit women throughout the country. Technical assistance from the United Nations was required, however, including assistance in the development of software for the empowerment of women in rural areas and in collecting best practices in the use of information and communications technology.

50. The Government was working with non-governmental organizations to combat trafficking in women through efforts to develop special institutions and mechanisms, the appointment of a national rapporteur, the strengthening of data collection and greater protection for victims. In addition, the State Minister for the Empowerment of Women was working continuously to raise awareness of the issue.

51. Moreover, the Government was working to implement a wide range of reforms to ensure a more

democratic society, inter alia by strengthening the legal system for the protection of women's rights and increasing the participation of women in political life. Indonesia welcomed the role of UNIFEM in that regard.

52. In conclusion, he underlined yet again the need for financial resources and various other forms of assistance for the developing countries, so that they themselves could implement the policies and programmes which were universally recognized as necessary for the common good.

53. **Ms. Gunnarsdóttir** (Iceland) said that her delegation had aligned itself with the statement made on behalf of the European Union. Full gender equality did not exist in practice in any country. The elimination of all forms of discrimination against women was first and foremost a question of political will and the setting of priorities. Governments could accomplish much by enacting legislation ensuring the rights of women in general and securing their freedom of movement and equality before the courts.

54. Iceland had already ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and its Optional Protocol, and her delegation appealed to all States which had not yet done so to follow its example. It also urged States parties to withdraw any reservations they had made which were incompatible with the objectives and purpose of the Convention, and reiterated that it was the obligation of States parties to implement the provisions of the Convention at the national level.

55. In Iceland, the focus was on equal pay for equal work between men and women and the representation of women in high-level decision-making positions, including in politics. The equitable sharing of parental and family responsibilities was another topic of national debate, and a law had been enacted in 2000 granting parents equal rights to parental leave.

56. Iceland was also working to reduce violence in general and against women in particular. Non-governmental organizations had played a very important role and the Government had taken various measures, including the establishment of an around-the-clock rape trauma service at a hospital in Reykjavik offering medical, psychological and legal services to victims of sexual violence. That service had helped to increase understanding of the serious health consequences of sexual violence and had already been used successfully for education and preventive work in schools.

57. With regard to Afghanistan and the terrible plight of Afghan women, she said that, if the United Nations should become involved in peace-building and reconstruction, it was imperative that Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) on women, peace and security should be implemented and that Afghan women should participate in the peace process. Iceland had been contributing for the past two years to the UNIFEM office in Kosovo, where women had been engaged in the political process, both as candidates and as voters. It was important that the United Nations should really be in a position to apply resolution 1325 (2000) in the field and verify how it was being implemented in practice.

58. In conclusion, she said that gender equality upheld the dignity of all human beings and contributed to the prosperity of society as a whole. Discrimination against women, far from affecting them alone, worked to the detriment of society as a whole.

59. **Ms. Rajaonarivelo** (Madagascar) supported the statement made by the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. She welcomed the entry into force in December 2000 of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, which allowed individuals or groups to submit communications directly to the Committee responsible for monitoring implementation of the Convention. Madagascar intended to ratify that Protocol in the near future and once again called on States which had entered reservations to the Convention to review their position. It also called on individuals and groups which defended the rights of women to ensure that the principle of equality was taken into account in national legislation.

60. Despite the progress made in promoting gender equality, which varied from country to country, much still remained to be done to strengthen the role of women, notably in development management, conflict prevention and peace-building.

61. The consequences of armed conflicts affected mostly women and children, millions of whom were in need of humanitarian assistance, and the number of women refugees continued to grow, especially in Africa. The General Assembly must, at its fifty-sixth session, endeavour to devise permanent and lasting

solutions applicable to all refugee women the world over, with respect for their cultural identity.

62. As to violence against women, she applauded the fact that the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court covered crimes such as sexual slavery and enforced prostitution. Madagascar had been one of the first countries to sign that instrument, which it intended to ratify. She also welcomed the initiative taken by the European Union with regard to the preparation of domestic-violence indicators in 2002.

63. Mindful of the link between racial discrimination and discrimination against women, her country welcomed the consensus reached in the Declaration and Programme of Action that had emerged from the Durban Conference and would continue to contribute to the struggle against discrimination in all its forms. The Malagasy Constitution prohibited all discrimination based on sex, educational level, social origin, race, religious belief, opinion or wealth.

64. Madagascar's policy for the advancement of women assigned special importance to rural women, who were more numerous than their urban counterparts. In the economic field, that policy was aimed overall at increasing investment and employment opportunities for women in all sectors, if necessary with the participation of men. In the field of education, the aim was to improve school enrolment and attendance rates among girls, promote their integration into society and provide education that reflected concern with gender equality. With regard to health policy, women were encouraged from adolescence onwards to practise healthy hygiene and to avail themselves of family planning and reproductive health care, with the participation of men where appropriate. Lastly, actors in civil society and non-governmental organizations were urged to pay more attention in their activities to women and their needs.

65. In conclusion, her delegation hoped that sufficient resources would be allocated to the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW) to enable it to continue its activities and attain the objectives set forth in the Millennium Declaration.

66. **Ms. Moreno** (Paraguay) said that gender equality should be at the centre of activities undertaken to attain the objectives set forth in the Millennium Declaration, whether it was to combat poverty, improve the quality of life of women and men or ensure respect for and enjoyment of fundamental rights.

67. In recent the years, Paraguay had followed up on the commitments it had entered into at the Beijing Conference and later at the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly and it had made substantial progress in several areas.

68. In the legislative area, it had put in place a legal framework that would fully guarantee the rights of women, ensuring not only their protection, but also their advancement on a broad scale, so that they could participate in all activities of society on an equal footing with men. It had recently adopted a Code on Childhood and Adolescence and a law against domestic violence to protect women, and children of both sexes, against physical, psychological and sexual abuse within the family.

69. The Department for Women's Affairs, the body responsible for sexual equality at all levels in State policies had made the implementation of the national plan for the prevention and suppression of violence against women one of its priorities in its fight against that scourge, which claimed many victims. It had also created a national assistance centre that provided all sorts of services to victims of conjugal violence.

70. One objective of Paraguay's educational reform was to guarantee genuine equality and a total absence of discrimination between the sexes. Moreover, the Department for Women's Affairs was cooperating closely with the Ministry of Education in the implementation of a programme designed to promote the equality of women and girls in education; the initial results had been an increase in the enrolment of girls in primary, middle and high schools.

71. In the field of health, a national epidemiological and maternal health and mortality monitoring commission had been established to continue to reduce the maternal and infant mortality rates, especially in peri-urban and rural areas.

72. The proportion of elected posts occupied by women had improved since the establishment of electoral quotas, but still left something to be desired.

73. In the economic field, the latest data obtained from the household survey had shown the poverty index to be lower in Paraguay when women played an important role. In the light of the region's poor economic situation, the agricultural campaign launched

by the Government for the period 2001-2002 placed emphasis on the traditional role of peasant women with regard to food security.

74. At the regional level, the Paraguayan Government, through the Department for Women's Affairs, was actively participating in regional conferences held in Latin America and the Caribbean to ensure the implementation of international commitments within the region. Lastly, at the subregional level, Paraguay and the other countries of the Southern Common Market (MERCOSUR) were endeavouring to ensure that the differences between the sexes were taken into consideration in the working groups of MERCOSUR on various questions.

75. **Mr. Al-Hazza** (Kuwait), speaking on agenda item 112, said that his delegation was carefully studying the reports of the Secretary-General on matters relating to women, and asked the international community to ensure that the important recommendations contained therein were implemented.

76. Regarding the advancement of women in Kuwait, the Kuwaiti Constitution, which forbade any type of discrimination based on sex, guaranteed women all political, economic and social rights; Kuwait had signed numerous instruments designed to protect and strengthen women's rights, thus recognizing the role that women could play in social development. The Government was in the process of finalizing a series of laws aimed at improving women's social situation and consolidating the results obtained in that field. There were already many Kuwaiti women in positions of responsibility, such as under-secretary of state, university rector or ambassador; moreover, women participated in many social and information activities within women's associations which received material support from the Government and they were entirely free to help build a modern society.

77. Hundreds of Kuwaiti women were experiencing grave psychological and social problems because their husbands, sons and/or relatives were still being held in Iraqi prisons after being taken prisoner during the occupation of Kuwait 11 years earlier. The situation was all the more painful for them in that they had no news of them, owing to Iraq's boycott of the Tripartite Commission responsible for examining the question of Kuwaiti and other prisoners and detainees and its silence on the fate of the 605 prisoners, seven of them young women. The issue of the Kuwaiti detainees was a humanitarian one which it was in no party's interest to politicize.

78. Despite the existence of a large number of international conventions devoted to women, women continued to be victims of discrimination and violence throughout the world, especially in war situations and situations of political conflict. Mention should be made in that regard of the suffering of the Palestinian women in the occupied Palestinian territories owing to the inhuman practices and policies of the Israeli occupation forces, and of the courage they displayed in the face of adversity.

79. **Mr. Ahsan** (Bangladesh) said that his delegation fully aligned itself with the statement made on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. While women's emancipation had been one of the major achievements of the twentieth century, the goal of equality, development and peace for all women, set at the Beijing Conference, was far from having being attained. With each new world conference on women new problems emerged, even as the preceding ones were being tackled, as had been shown during the five-year review of the follow-up to the Beijing Conference.

80. The eradication of poverty among women, which was both a cause and a consequence of their marginalization, was one of the areas that must remain a primary concern. Bangladesh had been providing microcredit to achieve that end and was currently endeavouring to extend its use to a number of areas (including housing, means of subsistence and social welfare), as part of a comprehensive anti-poverty initiative. That initiative could only yield results if the Government and civil society organizations joined forces and if the country's development partners, including the international financial institutions, came to its aid by, inter alia, developing an effective policy framework.

81. With regard to rural women, who were greatly affected by poverty, it was crucial, as the expert group meeting on the situation of rural women within the context of globalization had indicated, to help them to adapt to changes in the labour market and improve their means of subsistence, and to that end, do everything possible in the long term to improve their vocational skills. The recommendations contained in the report of the Secretary-General (A/56/268) were interesting in that regard.

82. Violence against women, an evil from which no country was immune and which was therefore a joint responsibility, was another area that called for more intensive efforts. The Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women should ensure that violations of the basic rights of women were forcefully addressed. Bangladesh had ratified the Convention and thus contributed to its entry into force.

83. His delegation shared the concern expressed by the Secretary-General in his report on violence against women migrant workers (A/56/329) that such women frequently had limited access to legal remedies in cases of discrimination and exploitation. The United Nations must continue to study issues affecting migrant women in a systematic manner; it was often limited knowledge that prevented Governments from responding effectively.

84. Special attention should be accorded to the situation of women in situations of armed conflict, not only because their human rights were violated in numerous ways, but also because women often contributed effectively to establishing peace, as had been seen in Africa, the Balkans, Asia and Latin America. He was gratified that the Beijing Platform for Action and the Beijing+5 outcome document contained provisions designed to enhance the contribution of women to peacemaking and peace-building; however, much follow-up action was needed in that area. The United Nations should give priority to that issue.

85. **Mr. Paiva** (Observer for the International Organization for Migration (IOM)), speaking on the issue of violence against women migrant workers under agenda item 112, said that growing numbers of women were not only migrating, but also migrating independently, which exposed them to considerable risks and presented enormous challenges to Governments, international organizations, non-governmental organizations and society at large.

86. Research on the feminization of migration conducted since the Beijing Conference had increased awareness of three of the major issues concerning women migrant workers. The first concerned the effects of migration on their empowerment, which was often weakened as a consequence, not strengthened. His organization had contributed to the body of knowledge in that area through a joint study with the United Nations International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW) on women migrant workers from Sri Lanka and Bangladesh. In accordance with one of the study's recommendations, IOM was currently helping potential women migrants to gain access to better information on their rights and obligations in host countries and on available avenues for recourse if they fell victim to discrimination or were exploited. It also played an active part, jointly with the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, the International Labour Organization and international non-governmental organizations in the work of the Steering Committee for the Global Campaign for Ratification of the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of their Families.

87. The second major issue concerning women migrant workers was their growing tendency to resort to irregular migration, which increased their susceptibility to violence and exploitation by limiting their access to employment in the structured sector and thus also to social welfare. Their vulnerability was threefold: they were vulnerable as women, as foreigners and as persons without legal residence status. In order to resolve the problem of irregular migration in general and of women migrant workers in particular, IOM was of the view that it was necessary to go beyond traditional control measures and address the root causes of the problem. Considerable emphasis must be placed on prevention efforts, in particular through information campaigns concerning avenues for legal migration and the risks inherent in irregular migration, especially those arising from having recourse to smugglers.

88. The third major issue affecting women migrant workers was that they were increasingly falling victim to traffickers. Having closely studied the issue for several years, IOM had concluded that there was a need for a strategy dealing with both prevention and assistance. With regard to prevention, IOM sought to ensure that women were better alerted in their countries of origin to the ruses adopted by traffickers and to the difficulties they would face if they fell victim to such ruses. (IOM had already launched information programmes of that kind in Central and Eastern Europe.) It also organized information campaigns in host countries for those most likely to come into contact with women, who were the victims of trafficking, particularly women forced into prostitution.

The first information campaign of that kind, organized during the past year in the Balkans, had yielded positive results.

89. With regard to assistance, IOM was working to protect women who were the victims of trafficking by providing them with housing, arranging medical attention, organizing their return home and facilitating their social reintegration, in close collaboration with host Governments, consulates, intergovernmental organizations and non-governmental organizations. It was particularly grateful to donor countries for their generous help in financing its activities.

90. The three issues he had mentioned could only be resolved through dialogue and cooperation between countries, which were all increasingly affected. The International Organization for Migration was heartened by the large number of Governments which had signed the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children and the Protocol against the Smuggling of Migrants by Land, Sea and Air, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, and that ratifications were proceeding rapidly. That could only help to regulate migration in the interests of both migrants and host countries.

91. **Mr. Millo** (Israel) said it was unacceptable that certain delegations diverted the Committee's attention from the agenda items under consideration in order to attack his country. Israel was not fighting against Palestinian women or against Palestinians in general. It was merely combating Palestinian violence and terrorism and exercising its legitimate right of self-defence.

92. The difficulties endured by the people of Palestine in recent years were the sole responsibility of the Palestinian Authority, which had rejected the very generous proposals made by Israel at Camp David and unleashed violence and terrorism against innocent Israeli civilians. That approach had not achieved anything, resulting only in a veritable bloodbath on both sides. There would be no solution if the Palestinians continued along that path.

93. That tragic situation should lead the Palestinians to the only valid logical and moral conclusion: that a solution would only be reached through negotiations; and the sooner the better.

94. **Mr. Ahmed** (Iraq) said that there were no Kuwaiti prisoners in Iraq, since all those detained after the 1991 ceasefire had been liberated. However, it was possible that there were Kuwaitis who had disappeared, just as there were Iraqis who had disappeared. Iraq continued to cooperate with the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) in order to shed some light on their whereabouts, in accordance with the pertinent international instruments. Also, it had always been ready to cooperate with any other competent party, whether ICRC, the Arab League, or Kuwait itself, without seeking to politicize the matter. There was no doubt that Kuwait was using the issue of those who had disappeared for a political end: to maintain the embargo against the Iraqi people, despite their suffering.

95. **Mr. Al-Hazza** (Kuwait), referring to the statement of the representative of Iraq according to which there were no Kuwaiti prisoners but only Kuwaitis who had disappeared, said that the resolutions of the Security Council did not mention disappeared persons, but only prisoners of war and that, as far as he was concerned, Iraq's cooperation, or rather the initiative it had proposed, was a way of not implementing those resolutions. Kuwait firmly rejected all Iraqi initiatives concerning the problem of prisoners that were not in compliance with the resolutions of the Security Council, even if those initiatives were submitted within the framework of the Arab League or any other pertinent entity.

96. **Ms. Barghouti** (Permanent Observer for Palestine) said that her delegation had not wished to exercise its right of reply, but the many misleading affirmations contained in the representative of Israel's statement, in particular, that the Palestinian Authority had caused the Camp David negotiations to fail and had resorted to violence and terrorism, forced her to speak.

97. The truth was that it was the Israeli occupying forces, with their racist and authoritarian practices, that were the cause of what was happening in the occupied territories. The Palestinian Authority had condemned violence in all its forms, particularly killing, many times. In response, the Israeli occupying forces had continued to commit assassinations, launch attacks and close off the occupied territories; all such practices had been condemned by the pertinent international instruments and by the international community, which considered that they were war crimes and a form of

State terrorism. As to the statement that Israel was a peaceful State, it was evident that it did not apply to the current Israeli Government, which, through its policies and the declarations of its official representatives, sought to sabotage every effort to achieve a ceasefire, prevent the implementation of the recommendations of the Mitchell Report, and obstruct the peace process, while clearly trying to undermine the efforts to establish a broad coalition against international terrorism.

The meeting rose at 12.35 p.m.